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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONTACT  
GROUP IN ROME

REF: ROME 1938

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Classified By: Acting Pol M/C Jonathan R. Cohen, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: A/S Frazer led the U.S. delegation to the September 10 meeting of the International Contact Group (ICG) on Somalia in Rome. ICG members discussed next steps following the conclusion of the National Reconciliation Congress (NRC) in Mogadishu and stressed the need for a roadmap for the remainder of the transitional political process through 2009 and full deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The final text of the ICG communique is reported reftel. END SUMMARY.

SENTINELLI - NRC A "SUCCESS"  
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12. (U) Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer led the U.S. delegation to the September 10 meeting of the International Contact Group (ICG) on Somalia in Rome. Italian MFA Director General for Sub-Saharan Africa Armando Sanguini chaired the meeting, and Vice Minister for Development Assistance and Sub-Saharan Africa Patrizia Sentinelli delivered opening remarks. Norway, Sweden, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, Kenya on behalf of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the League of Arab States attended the meeting. Canada, Egypt, France and Yemen also participated as observers. This meeting also marked the first international appearance of the new UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah. The Foreign Minister of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was invited to brief the ICG on the TFG's efforts following the conclusion of the NRC.

13. (U) Sentinelli's opening remarks noted that this ICG meeting was the first opportunity for the group to reflect on the recently concluded NRC. She recalled concerns that the NRC might never get off the ground, or would be the target of attacks by extremists. The successful conclusion of the NRC was a significant milestone, although Sentinelli noted that violence and insecurity remained problems, particularly in Mogadishu. She highlighted statements that emerged from the NRC on the role of women in Somali politics, and urged the ICG to continue to press the TFG to focus on this theme.

AFTER THE NRC, THE WAY FORWARD  
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¶4. (C) There was broad agreement that the NRC had been a positive, if imperfect, development in promoting dialogue among Somali stakeholders. Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Raymond Johansen acknowledged that the international community "cannot pretend" that the NRC achieved all of its objectives, but emphasized that the conclusions and recommendations of the NRC offered a way forward in the transitional political process. Johansen urged ICG members to judge the TFG based on President Abdullahi Yusuf's statement at the NRC closing ceremony in Mogadishu in which he vowed to "pave a new political path that will win the confidence of the Somali people" through continued dialogue and outreach.

¶5. (C) A/S Frazer identified three areas as critical to success in Somalia: 1) achieving a more equitable power-sharing arrangement within the TFG following the conclusion of the NRC, as well as bringing pressure to bear on Eritrea and Qatar for supporting rejectionists in Asmara; 2) addressing the deteriorating security environment and threat of violence through a ceasefire agreement; and 3) supporting the full deployment of AMISOM. Finally, A/S Frazer emphasized the need to look internally at the structure of the ICG, which was now far too large to be effective for specific action in the political process. A/S Frazer suggested that another configuration may be necessary, perhaps smaller groups focused on discrete areas of action in which certain countries have particular expertise or interest.

¶6. (C) Tanzania said that full deployment of AMISOM had been frustrated by a lack of logistical and financial support, and urged the ICG to press countries for greater contributions to AMISOM. A/S Frazer pointed out that financing was not the only obstacle to AMISOM deployment and that some countries were hesitant to send their troops into a volatile and dangerous situation. Several delegates asked whether the UN could assume the AMISOM mission, at least on financial and

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logistical matters.

¶7. (C) ICG members shared common views on the need to assist the TFG in operationalizing the conclusions of the NRC through development of a roadmap for the remainder of the transitional political process through 2009. Delegates also discussed the need to reach out to the opposition and to include all those who reject violence. Kenya, participating as IGAD chair, called for ICG unity, and expressed concern over ICG members attending parallel peace talks in Asmara, which created the appearance of a divided international community. Egypt emphasized the need to look into monitoring and ensuring the accountability of the TFG during the transitional period, and to support the establishment of transitional bodies as outlined by the Transitional Federal Charter. Egypt offered to help establish "channels of communication" to opposition elements needing to be brought into the broader political process. The AU emphasized the need to consider those not participating constructively as spoilers who must not be tolerated.

TFG - WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT, BUT DON'T TIE OUR HANDS  
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¶8. (C) TFG Foreign Minister Hussein Elabe Fahiye presented a rosy picture to the ICG, describing Somalia as "emerging from civil war" in which terrorists are "fading away." Fahiye stressed the need to create a "conducive environment" through the full deployment of AMISOM and appealed to the international community to provide support to the AU forces to "help maintain peace." Fahiye also appealed for international support in training of the TFG military and police. As conditions continue to improve, Fahiye made a plea for the international community to follow the lead of Yemen and Norway and establish embassies or offices in Mogadishu.

¶9. (C) Fahiye outlined the TFG's priorities as: 1) drafting a

new constitution and submitting it to the Parliament for approval, to be followed by popular referendum; 2) completing a national census, which Fahiye cautioned may not be possible within the remaining 2 year period; 3) establishing political parties; and 4) conducting free and fair multi-party elections in 2009. Fahiye said that the TFG welcomes the participation of a loyal opposition, who could even "take over if they want to." Fahiye characterized the NRC as having ended successfully, but said that the process was only beginning and would continue with local and regional reconciliation until a final agreement is reached.

¶10. (C) A/S Frazer urged the TFG to reach out to those who have so far remained outside of the political process. Norway and the UK asked for a timetable for achieving the TFG's goals, and questioned whether it would be possible to complete a national census in the remaining mandate of the TFG. The European Commission echoed those concerns, and said that from previous experience in Burundi it already appeared too late to conduct a complete census before elections if the elections are to be held according to schedule in 2009. Without providing specific details on the timetable, Fahiye acknowledged that the timeframe was ambitious, but maintained it was achievable and necessary. On reaching out, Fahiye said that the TFG "will do all it can," did not want to discriminate against anyone, and wanted all to take part, as long as opposition figures renounce violence and "play by acceptable rules." In response to a question from the European Union on whether the TFG wanted the assistance of the international community in facilitating links or dialogue with opposition figures, Fahiye said that the TFG would welcome the assistance of the international community, but cautioned not to "tie our hands."

#### AMISOM AND THE UN - THE VIEW ON THE GROUND

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¶11. (C) Ugandan Major General Benon Buta Biraaro, speaking on behalf of AMISOM, warned the ICG that the NRC had only been made possible because of the presence of Ethiopian troops in Mogadishu. Those troops would not be sufficient to provide security throughout the country for elections, and AMISOM remained far below its intended deployment strength. Biraaro said that elections in 2009 would be possible if there were a full deployment of UN troops on the ground now, but questioned whether the timetable was workable given the current reality. The Deputy Foreign Minister of Kenya, representing IGAD, and the AU representative repeatedly and forcefully called for deployment of a UN peace operation in Somalia and insisted it be included in the final communique.

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¶12. (SBU) On the humanitarian situation, UN Resident Representative Eric Laroche said that the current situation was the worst in his three years in Somalia, noting the high rates of malnutrition and increase of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Laroche cited reduced trade from the Bakara market and a recent printing of Somali currency by the TFG as contributing to the worsening situation. Laroche urged the ICG to "support peace dividends" and help build the mid-level governance capacity of the TFG. Finally, Laroche noted that the UN and World Bank were moving to finalize the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), but that the TFG had refused to support the RDP because it did not sufficiently address the issue of federalism and TFG sovereignty.

#### A/S FRAZER MEETS WITH NEW SRSG FOR SOMALIA

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¶13. (C) After the conclusion of the ICG meeting, A/S Frazer met privately with newly-appointed SRSG for Somalia Ould-Abdallah at his request. Ould-Abdallah said that from previous experience he believed a weak government was better than none at all, and that despite its weakness the TFG was

the only option.

¶14. (C) Ould-Abdallah said Darfur and Somalia are UNSYG Ban Ki-moon's top priorities in Africa, and that he would press for similar levels of engagement on the two conflicts. He noted that there are "too many actors" within the international community on Somalia and that this leaves the international community vulnerable to manipulation by Somalis. Ould-Abdallah said that one of his first challenges would be to ensure coordinated messages from the international community. He also said that he would be in Washington at the beginning of October for meetings at the World Bank and would welcome the opportunity meet with USG officials on Somalia.

¶15. (C) A/S Frazer discussed her concerns about Eritrea's role as a spoiler, seeking to destabilize Somalia through support for terrorists and extremists. Bringing in members of the opposition in Somalia is important, she said, but so is a commitment by all parties to non-violent dialogue. Ould-Abdallah noted that Saudi Arabia could play a more positive, constructive role in Somalia, particularly in influencing former members of the Council of Islamic Courts, and said that he plans to seek a more constructive Saudi role in consultations with Saudi government officials.

A/S FRAZER WITH SANGUINI - ICG BECOMING UNWIELDY  
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¶16. (C) The previous evening, A/S Frazer met Italian DG for Africa Armando Sanguini to review the situation in Somalia prior to the full ICG meeting. Sanguini outlined Italy's thinking on "the new scenario" for Somalia following the conclusion of the NRC, which includes judging the TFG based on its public comments during the NRC, particularly those of President Yusuf, as well as attempting to split the unity of the group in Asmara. A/S Frazer questioned the international community's lack of leverage to date over the TFG and emphasized the need for a united voice against extremists and terrorists in Somalia, particularly the radical al Shabaab militia. A/S Frazer and Sanguini discussed possible options for downsizing the ICG and creating more effective mechanisms for international engagement in Somalia, including the possible establishment of an informal core group of the U.S., UK, Norway, and Italy or, as suggested by AU Peace and Security Commissioner Said Djinnit, institutionalizing a facilitating framework with a UN/AU lead supported by other ICG members. A/S Frazer also said that AU Commission Chair Alpha Oumar Konare had recently informed her that he planned to appoint a new Mogadishu-based Special Envoy for Somalia.

¶17. (U) A/S Frazer has cleared this message.  
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